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3 March 2011

Mrs L Treadway
Headteacher
Sandbach Community Primary School
Crewe Road
Sandbach
Cheshire
CW11 4NS

Dear Mrs Treadway

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Sandbach Community Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 2 March 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Discussions with the leadership team, members of the governing body, the pupils and a representative from the local authority were also very helpful in evaluating the progress the school has made. Please pass on my thanks to all concerned for the time they gave to talk to me and for the welcome I received.

Since the November 2009 inspection, three permanent and two temporary members of staff have left the school. In September 2010, a new staffing structure was established. This includes a newly appointed deputy headteacher and new subject leaders for English and mathematics. A new Reception teacher joined the school in September. An Early Years Foundation Stage unit has been established from two separate classrooms. In addition, a children's centre, which is not managed by the governing body, has been built on the school site. This centre was opened in February 2011. Following local authority reorganisation, the school moved to half-form entry from September 2010. All pupils are taught in mixed-age classes.

As a result of the inspection on 17–18 November 2009, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement, which are set out in the annex to this letter.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made satisfactory progress in making improvements and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

The results for Key Stage 2 fell in 2010. They are significantly below the national average, with pupils making less than expected progress. The results for English were broadly similar to the previous year, but attainment in mathematics declined. Although pupils made accelerated progress in Year 6, there were too many gaps in their learning from previous teaching to reach the expected standards. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 also fell,

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but within this very small cohort, pupils made the expected progress from their starting points. More pupils attained the higher levels at Key Stage 1 than in Key Stage 2. The school's detailed tracking data suggest that the majority of pupils are now attaining broadly average standards for their age in reading and mathematics. Attainment in writing remains variable. In addition, almost all pupils are making the expected and often better progress in reading and writing. This is a more consistent picture than at the last inspection. Progress is strongest in Reception and in Years 1 and 2. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress because of the additional support they receive in lessons. Although the school's data confirm pupils' academic achievement is improving, more work needs to be done to ensure all pupils in upper Key Stage 2 attain expected standards.

Pupils are making more consistent progress across the school because the quality of teaching is improving. More good teaching was observed than at the last inspection. There is a good degree of consistency between classes in how pupils' work is presented and marked. Pupils regularly receive detailed feedback on their work, which indicates what they need to do to improve. All pupils know their targets. Older pupils know the level they are working at and the level they are aiming for by the end of the year. They are, however, less certain of what they need to do to achieve this goal. Improvements to planning have resulted in activities being better tailored to the learning needs of pupils. This is more evident for the lower achieving pupils. Although teachers are considering how to challenge the more-able pupils, not enough attention is given to assessment information to match tasks to their specific needs.

The school's focus on raising standards in reading has led to an improvement in pupils' progress in and enjoyment of reading. Particularly effective has been the systematic approach to teaching reading in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 and the reviewed strategies for guided reading in Key Stage 2. As a result, most pupils, including boys, have a better letter-sound knowledge and are able to decode unfamiliar texts and read with fluency and understanding. In contrast, the school has made less progress in raising standards in writing. This is because, in some classes, there are too few opportunities for pupils to write for sustained periods of time. Recent improvements in mathematics, including sharper intervention programmes, an emphasis on problem-solving and a renewed focus on calculation, are resulting in broadly average attainment in most year groups. Nevertheless, further improvement is required to ensure all pupils make the expected progress in this subject.

School and national information confirm attendance levels are above the national average. This is a considerable improvement since the last inspection. This has been achieved through a systematic approach to rewarding good attendance and tightening procedures for tackling absence.

The headteacher is committed to improving the school further. Her drive and determination is shared with staff and members of the governing body leading to a common sense of purpose. Systems for monitoring pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching and learning are now embedded although, as the school recognises, there is further work to do

to ensure whole-school evaluation leads to sharper targets. Nonetheless, school leaders have an accurate understanding of what needs to improve. The school development plan is based on appropriate priorities for improvement and professional development is tailored to whole school and individual needs. As a result, there is a firm foundation for further improvement. Members of the governing body have been closely involved in monitoring the progress of the school along with the headteacher and local authority. This has enhanced the governing body's ability to hold the school to account.

The local authority has provided a wide range of effective and well-targeted support and challenge. The school is now taking a much greater role in directing this support towards its identified priorities.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Miss Joanne Olsson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in November 2009

- Raise standards further, and increase rates of progress, across the core subjects but especially in English and for the more able pupils.
- Improve further the attendance of those pupils with the highest levels of absence.